CIDAC TL2490
Centro de Documentação

RESEARCH PROJECT ON TIMOR DOCUMENTATION IN MACAU

PROGRESS REPORT No. 6

TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORY UNIVERSITY PLANNING AUTHORITY

Work has continued at the same brisk rate with the locating and copying of material about Timor at the Arquivo Histórico de Macau (AHM) during the day and with the preliminary processing of that material in my room at night and at weekends.

About 75 % of the Portuguese-language journals printed in Macau between the 1870's and 1930's and held by the AHM, as well as one from Hongkong and one from Shanghai, have now been inspected. This does not include the Boletim Oficial da Provincia, with which I have got no further than 1891, but I hope to have time to get back within the next month so that I can cover the period up until Timor started to publish its own Boletim in 1900. For various unavoidable reasons there has been a slight delay in the actual photocopying, and I am currently some 20 volumes ahead of it, but I expect that the backlog will be cleared within the next month or so.

Some of the sets of journals are complete, but others have a number of copies missing and occasionally a complete volume. In most cases the items missing would be few enough to appear as addenda, once I have had the chance in the future to locate copies which might be available somewhere. In a couple of cases the missing copies would include instalments of serialized reports about Timor; this is evident from the fact that the issue number from which something is continued is usually given at the beginning of the next instalment. Last week I was lamenting that what must have been the last instalment of a most interesting series of articles by José dos Santos Vaquinhas was in a missing issue, but was pleased to find it continued about 15 issues later with an indication that it was continued from the number before the missing one!

References to Darwin continue to appear in the material occasionally. In my last report I referred to a Darwin firm purchasing the vessel "Thomaz Andrea" from the Portuguese Government in order to begin a Darwin-Dili run. Another report which I have seen since, from the same year of 1901, refers to a Darwin business-man, Mr. Jolly, as planning to open a trading-house in Dili, and I would suppose that he was the one who had bought the vessel. It was hoped that Timor would benefit more by having the coffee crop sent out through Darwin than by being at the mercy of the Dutch in Macassar. Do you know if there is anything on file in Darwin or Adelaide about the activities of Mr. Jolly? Published or unpublished?

Something that keeps coming to mind and which I cannot fail to remark upon, even though it falls outside of the range of my Timor research, is the great number of regular first-hand reports to the Macau press from various parts of the Far East. Hundreds of people who were born and/or educated in Macau were later employed in businesses throughout the Far East---Shanghai, Canton, Amoy, Fuchau, Haiphong, Manila, Kobe, Yokohama, Nagasaki, Bangkok, Korea, not to forget Hongkong and Singapore---or became missionaries. They were witnesses to so much, and many of them wrote of it. The Boxer Rebellion, the Spanish-American War and American occupation of the Philippines, the Russo-Japanese War, birth of the Republic of China---just to cover a fairly short span of years. How much, if any, notice has been taken of this material by students of Asian History? Little, if any, is the response from people to whom I have put that question. What are the chances of this material being assessed and summarized for interested persons by experts who are fluent in Portuguese? Material written in many cases by people who thought of Asia as being their home, at a time when the state and commercial flag-bearers of other "empire-builders" could, for the most part, be considered as being in the East on postings. Perhaps with some viewpoints which are different from those which have come to be accepted.

I really must begin posting some of the books and papers back soon. It was with great pleasure recently that I heard that the Postal Services of Macau would be releasing a range of 5 different sizes of boxes suitable for postage. It was with an almost equal degree of DISpleasure that I found that they had ignored the international A4 size of paper (210 x 297mm) in their choice of width and length of internal measurements. It is, after all, the standard size of correspondence paper used in Macau, and I am sure that the Postal Services have overlooked the many potential customers, particularly commercial ones, who would have used them for advertising leaflets, price lists, catalogues, and whatever books are published in A4 size. Ideally, they should have had a size with internal measurements of about 230 x 320mm; this would allow for A4 size paper in the most commonly used binders. But I would have been willing to take my research papers out of the binders if the boxes were only large enough for the sheets. It is such a pity, as the sizes issued came so close. Size C has effective internal measurements of 305 x 196mm---14mm too narrow. Sizes D and E are 2 different depths with effective internal measurements of 425 x 290mm---one could just fit 2 piles of A4 side by side, but the 290mm is 7mm too short. Fortunately, I shall be able to use them for most of the published material that I have acquired in bound form, but I shall have to hunt around for other containers of a better size for all of my notes and photocopies. For the record, sizes A and B are just a little too small for A5 paper. I must send a copy of this paragraph to the Postal Services of Macau!

One thing that I have not been able to do much about yet is to inspect the National Library's collection of older books. The reason is given in the following translation of a release from the Gabinete da Comunicação Social just over a week ago:-

"National Library in the Leal Senado

The installations of the National Library in the Leal Senado will probably reopen to the public in February of next year, after having stayed closed to the public since June of 1983 for works.

Those works embrace electrical installation, with the alteration of voltage from 110-180 to 220-280, the mounting of air-conditioning and dehumidifying apparatus and the introduction of direct lighting on the reading tables.

There still remains only the restoration of the flooring, given that the rest of the equipment (tables, chairs, shelves and cupboards) has been restored in the past year.

Dr. Graça Jácome, the person in charge of the National Library of Macau, which has installations in the Leal Senado, Avenida Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida and Coloane, affirmed further that those works are necessary because for a long time the installations had not been the object of any improvement whatsoever.

In the Leal Senado branch, where, until a short time ago, nearly all the holdings had been held, will be maintained all the works anterior to 1950, thus preserving its historical character, the others, more than 170 thousand pieces, going to the new installations in the Avenida Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida.

The Librarian anticipated, on the other hand, that the growth of the Leal Senado branch would come about with donations of old books on the part of private or public entities."

Dr. Maria da Graça Jácome has invited me to go to the Leal Senado to inspect the books when she next goes there for a considerable amount of work, but she is away in Portugal for a few weeks, and this opportunity may not arrive until September.

Speaking of old books, and even not-so-old but second-hand books, I have recently had the opportunity to inspect a few deposits which could be termed private or private-institutional, and are therefore not within the responsibilities of the Biblioteca Nacional de Macau (BNM) or of the AHM. In one case, the responsible people are doing the best they can as far as time and resources allow, and they are quite conscious of the problems associated with book collections in the climatic conditions of Macau. In another case, it is a matter of a private collection of which very good use is being made, and an individual is free to maintain or leave his own property in whatever state he may care to, though I may be anguished at seeing the current physical conditions that some of it is kept in; by this, I mean not only the matters of sunlight, humidity, insects, shelving, but also manner of stacking (one could almost say piling) and the amount of distortion and/or damage caused to a book by failure to store it upright or flat. As for two of the other private-institutional deposits, they are neat enough, but both are held in rooms where the window-shutters remain closed but the glazed windows remain open, not a very good idea in a humid climate such as this; and one of the two deposits, probably unique in Macau, and currently more-or-less a "dead" collection, is badly effected by insects, mould, humidity, etc. Some people are aware of this, and want to do something about it, including people within the overall structure of that institution. The nature of that overall institution is such that it, very understandably, has much higher priorities within its regional social, political and spiritual jurisdiction, but both it and the world will stand to lose what may be a reasonably precious part of mankind's heritage if it does not soon make a move towards the more urgent settlement of the question of the conservation and future of this collection.

One other "deposit", at which I am grateful to have had the opportunity to look, was deplorable, and, when one thinks about it, there are probably thousands of similar deplorable "deposits" scattered throughout the world. What does one do with the book collections of deceased persons whose entire estates are left to an institution whose prime functions are not the care of such book collections? Leave them in dark and dank storerooms with partially bricked-up but unglazed windows allowing easy access for moisture and insects and rats, the rats adding to the deterioration with their excreta and urine? Surely, there should be some way of offering such collections, at an early date, to local public and research collections. In this particular instance there were rare works which are out-of-print and in demand; others which may be well-represented in local collections but of interest to libraries elsewhere; some odd numbers of rare serials; some complete volumes of less rare serials which may, at the same time, become rare, even though they may be recent in publication date, if worms in copies held elsewhere are chewing away to the same degree as they are in this particular deposit.

Without wishing to incur the wrath of people in the second-hand or "antiquarian" book trade or of people who wish to profit as much as possible from deceased estates, perhaps it would be a good idea for all regional public libraries to have someone on the staff whose primary function would be to assess the contents of the book collections in deceased estates. The functionary involved would probably have to go to view the collection and make any required listing of works of interest, rather than waiting for the collection and any listing to come to them. The functionary should be someone sufficiently expert to generally judge what may be of interest to their local libraries and to public and research libraries elsewhere. Problems of space for holding the works selected and of responsibilities for forwarding to other libraries would be considerable. But it should be possible to establish some form of listings which would be available through international library associations, perhaps under the auspices of UNESCO. And I think that there should be some form of time scale where such works would first be available to public institutions, then private institutions and individuals, on a progressive local, national, then international basis. Length of time of holding something before disposal to dealers or destruction would have to be decided.

Perhaps the idea is not at all practical, but it is a shame to see this material going to waste. To see such waste may turn some people into thieves in order to save it. My conscience won't allow me to do so, but I can understand how some people might succumb to the temptation. Decisions should be made on just what <u>is</u> going to happen to such deposits, otherwise they will only end up on the rubbish tip once they have got beyond the stage of use and recuperation.

I must stress that I do not hold any fears about the collections in the care of the BNM and the AHM. The authorities acknowledge the necessity of a more suitably adapted building for the AHM than the way in which the present one is fitted out. I hope that the AHM will eventually have the technical facilities and trained staff necessary for the recuperation and arrest of deterioration of incoming material, as well as sufficient staff for the huge task of transcribing, recording and divulgation ahead of them. The BNM and the AHM will do the best that they can within the limits set by finance, staff, departmental policies and time.

I'm afraid that I have had little to say about the Timor material in this report, but there is little that I would be able to add beyond what I have said on page 1 without becoming merely anecdotal.

Macau, July 1984.

Kevin Sherlock